

Immigrants from the Dominican Republic in the United States

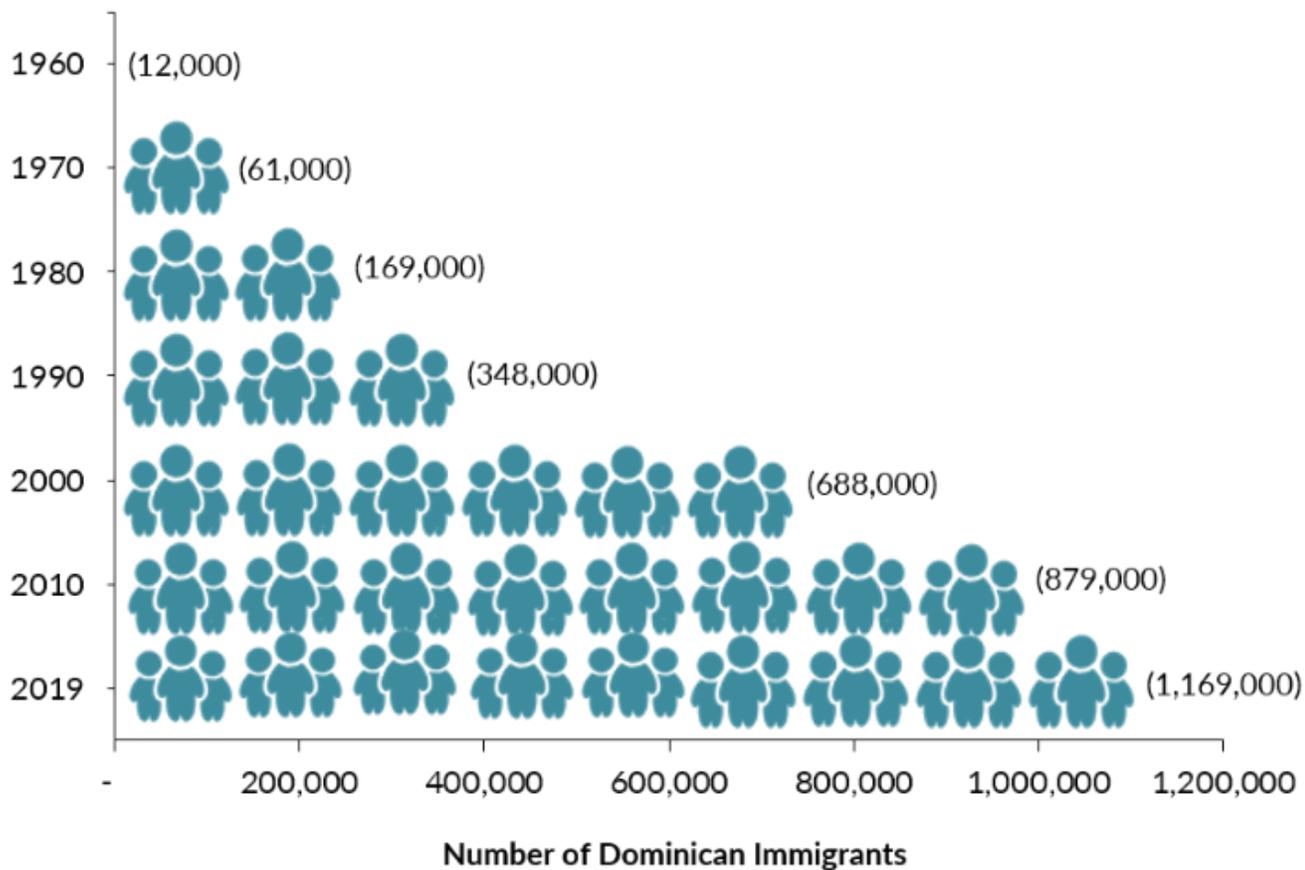
April 15, 2021 SPOTLIGHT | By Erin Babich and Jeanne Batalova

Immigrants from the Dominican Republic are the fourth-largest Hispanic immigrant group in the United States, after Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Cubans. The Dominican foreign-born population increased by 33 percent from 2010 to 2019, making its nearly 1.2 million people close to 3 percent of the overall U.S. immigrant population of 44.9 million.

The number of Dominican immigrants has been growing rapidly over the last 60 years, in a migration pattern triggered by political and economic upheaval following the assassination of the country's longtime dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1961. In response to the unrest following Trujillo's death, dissidents, university students, professors, and many middle-class workers left for the United States in the 1960s. The U.S. embassy facilitated this emigration by issuing visas. As time progressed, later Dominican arrivals included low-income and working-class individuals, many of whom were women, fleeing the Latin American economic crisis. Decades later, there continue to be more female than male Dominican immigrants residing in the United States.

In 1960, the Dominican immigrant population was 12,000. This number increased fivefold within a decade to 61,000, nearly tripled from 1970 to 1980, doubled in both the 1980s and 1990s, and has continued to grow since then, albeit at a slower pace.

Figure 1. Dominican Immigrant Population in the United States, 1960–2019



Sources: Data from U.S. Census Bureau 2010 and 2019 American Community Surveys (ACS), and Campbell J. Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850-2000" (Working Paper no. 81, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, February 2006), [available online](#).

Dominican immigrants overwhelmingly enter in the United States through familial channels, with 99 percent arriving through family-sponsored preferences versus 69 percent of immigrants as a whole.

More Dominican immigrants have limited English proficiency than other foreign born, with 63 percent speaking English less than "very well." They are also less likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher.

The United States is the most popular destination for Dominicans living abroad, accounting for about 75 percent of all emigrants from the Dominican Republic. Spain is home to the next largest population of Dominicans (167,000), followed by the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico (51,000), Italy (46,000), and Venezuela (14,000), according to mid-2019 United Nations Population Division estimates.

[Click here](#) to view an interactive map showing where migrants from the Dominican Republic and other countries have settled worldwide.

Within the United States, 60 percent of all Dominican immigrants live in one of two states: New York and New Jersey.

The following Spotlight uses the U.S. Census Bureau's one-year and five-year pooled 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data and the Department of Homeland Security's 2019 *Yearbook of*

Immigration Statistics to provide demographic features of the Dominican foreign-born population in the United States, including its size, geographic distribution, and socioeconomic outcomes.

Definitions

The U.S. Census Bureau defines the **foreign born** as individuals who had no U.S. citizenship at birth. The foreign-born population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, legal nonimmigrants (including those on student, work, or other temporary visas), and persons residing in the country without authorization.

The terms “**foreign born**” and “**immigrant**” are used interchangeably and refer to those who were born in another country and later emigrated to the United States.

Data collection constraints do not permit inclusion of those who gained Dominican citizenship via naturalization and later moved to the United States.

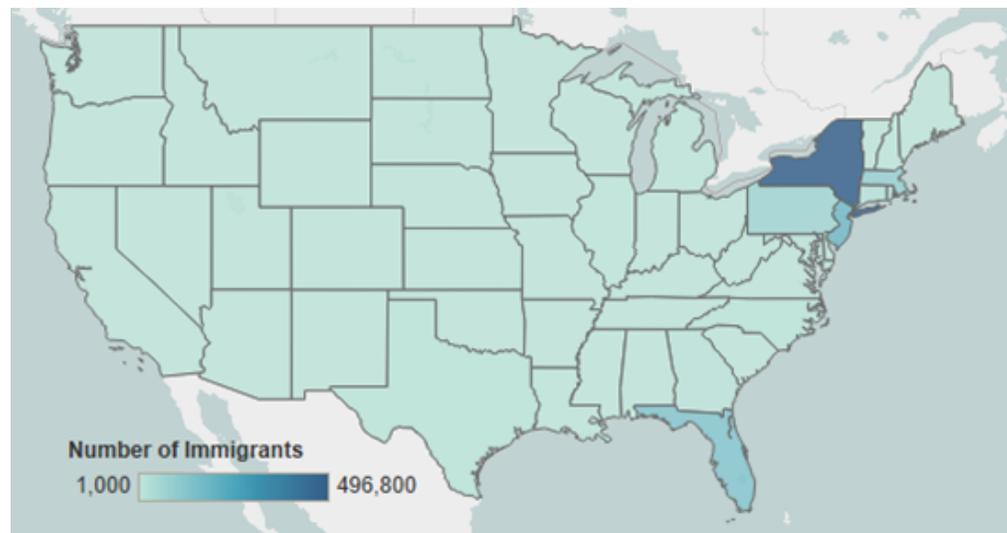
Click on the bullet points below for more information:

- **Distribution by State and Key Cities**
- **English Proficiency**
- **Age, Education, and Employment**
- **Income and Poverty**
- **Immigration Pathways and Naturalization**
- **Unauthorized Population**
- **Health Coverage**
- **Diaspora**
- **Remittances**

Distribution by State and Key Cities

In the 2015-19 period, Dominican immigrants continued to live in traditional areas of settlement. Forty-four percent resided in the state of New York, with 28 percent living in Bronx and New York (Manhattan) counties alone. The next three states with the largest Dominican immigrant populations were New Jersey (16 percent), Florida (12 percent), and Massachusetts (8 percent).

Figure 2. Top States of Residence for Dominicans in the United States, 2015–19

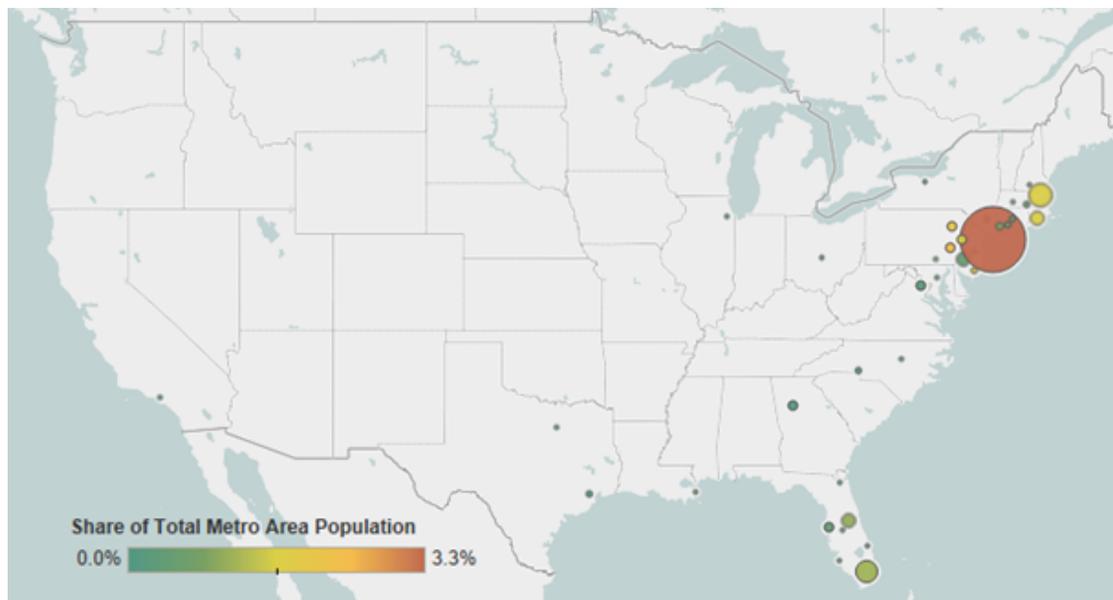


Note: Pooled 2015-19 ACS data were used to get statistically valid estimates at the state level for smaller-population geographies. Not shown are the populations in Alaska and Hawaii; for details, visit the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Migration Data Hub for an interactive map showing geographic distribution of immigrants by state and county, [available online](#).

Source: MPI tabulation of data from U.S. Census Bureau pooled 2015-19 ACS.

The greater New York (57 percent), Boston (7 percent), and Miami (6 percent) areas were home to the largest numbers of Dominican immigrants.

Figure 3. Top Metropolitan Areas of Residence for Dominicans in the United States, 2015–19



Note: Pooled 2015-19 ACS data were used to get statistically valid estimates at the metropolitan statistical-area level for smaller-population geographies. Visit the MPI Migration Data Hub for an interactive map showing geographic distribution of immigrants by metropolitan area, [available online](#).

Source: MPI tabulation of data from U.S. Census Bureau pooled 2015-19 ACS.

Click here to view an interactive map showing the share of Dominican immigrants in metropolitan areas and immigrant populations from other countries.

Table 1. Top Concentrations by Metropolitan Area of Dominican Immigrants in the United States, 2015–19

Metropolitan Area	Immigrant Population from the Dominican Republic	% of Metro Area Population
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	641,000	3.3%
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	81,000	1.7%
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL	72,000	1.2%
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	30,000	0.5%
Providence-Warwick, RI-MA	28,000	1.7%
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	27,000	1.1%
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	14,000	0.2%
Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ	13,000	1.6%
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	13,000	0.4%
Scranton-Wilkes-Barre-Hazleton, PA	11,000	2.0%

Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau pooled 2015-19 ACS.

English Proficiency

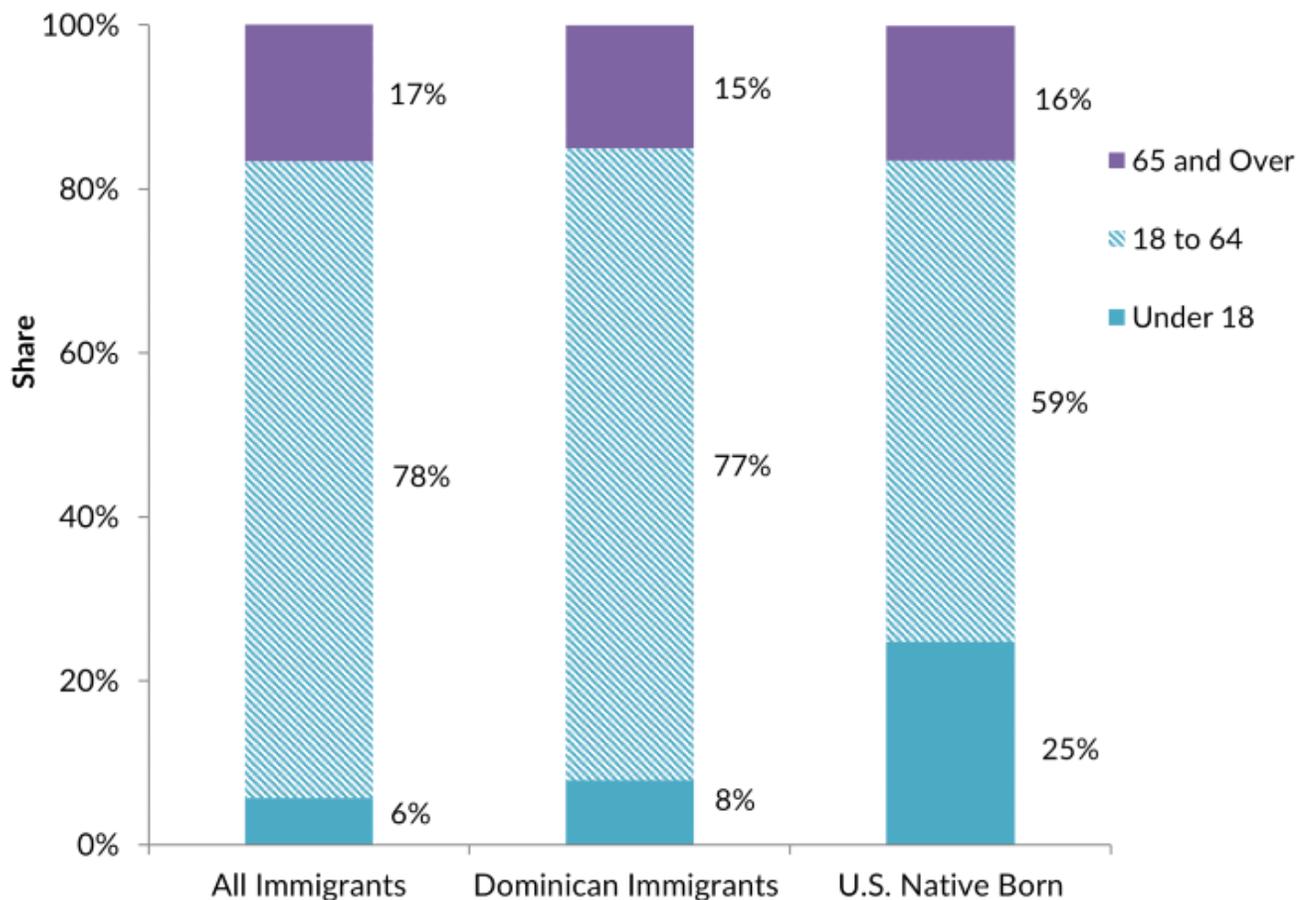
Dominican immigrants are more likely to be Limited English Proficient (LEP) compared to the overall foreign-born population. In 2019, 63 percent of Dominicans ages 5 and over reported limited English proficiency, compared with 46 percent of all immigrants. Just 4 percent of Dominican immigrants reported speaking only English at home, versus 16 percent of all immigrants.

Note: LEP refers to those who indicated on the ACS questionnaire that they spoke English less than “very well.”

Age, Education, and Employment

The age distribution of Dominican immigrants is nearly identical to that of the total foreign-born population: 8 percent were under age 18, 77 percent were between 18 and 64, and 15 percent were ages 65 and older. Both groups were older than the U.S. born: The median age for Dominicans was 45 years old and for all immigrants it was 46 years old, versus 37 for the native born.

Figure 4. Age Distribution of the U.S. Population by Origin, 2019



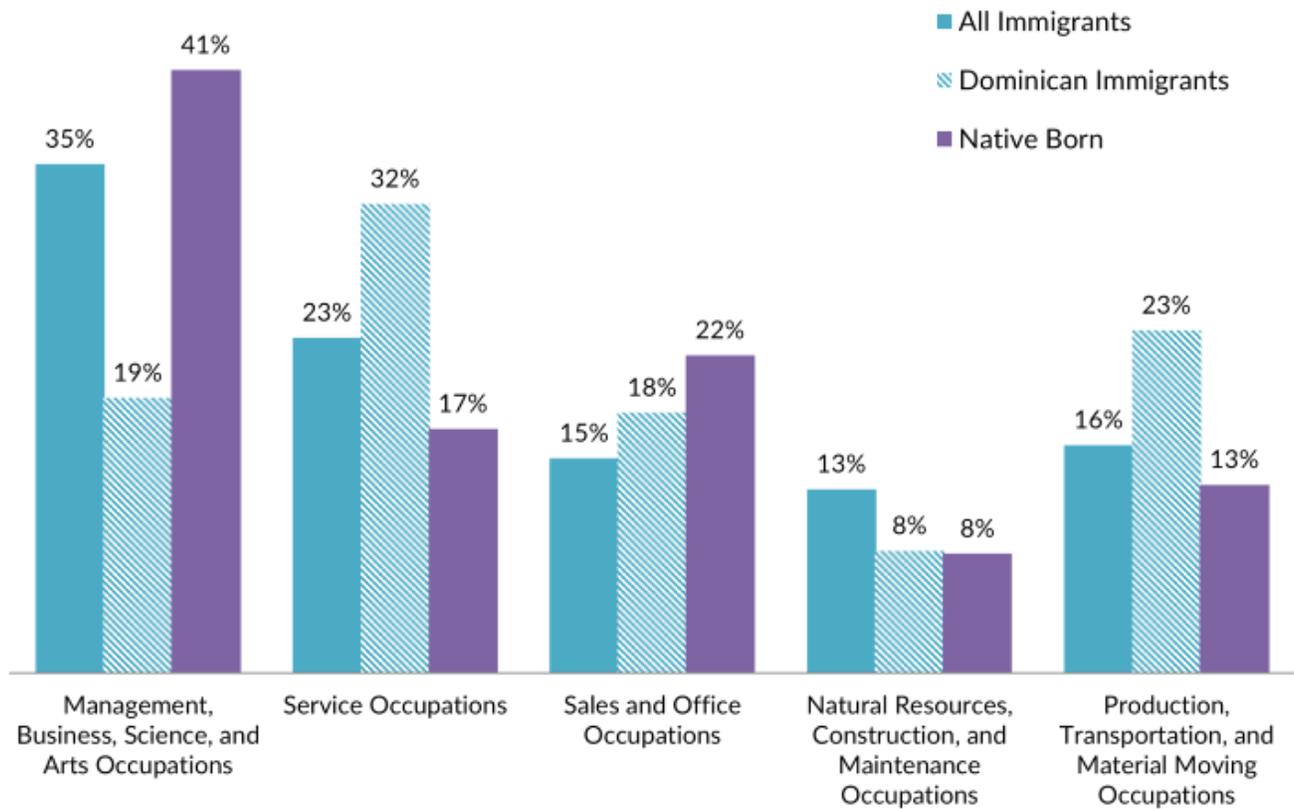
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 as they are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS.

Dominican immigrant adults have much lower rates of educational attainment than both the native and overall immigrant populations. In 2019, approximately 31 percent of Dominican immigrants ages 25 and older did not have a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to 26 percent of foreign-born and 8 percent of U.S.-born adults. Only 17 percent of Dominican immigrants reported having a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 33 percent of both U.S.-born and all immigrant adults.

Dominican immigrant workers primarily partake in service occupations (32 percent), as well as production, transportation, and material moving (23 percent). They are much less likely to work in the management, business, science, and arts (19 percent) occupations compared to U.S.-born workers (41 percent) and immigrant workers overall (35 percent).

Figure 5. Employed Workers in the U.S. Civilian Labor Force (ages 16 and older) by Occupation and Origin, 2019



Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS.

Income and Poverty

Dominican immigrants have significantly lower median household incomes than the general foreign-born and native populations. In 2019, Dominicans reported a median household income of \$44,000, while the total foreign-born and native populations had median household incomes of \$64,000 and \$66,000, respectively.

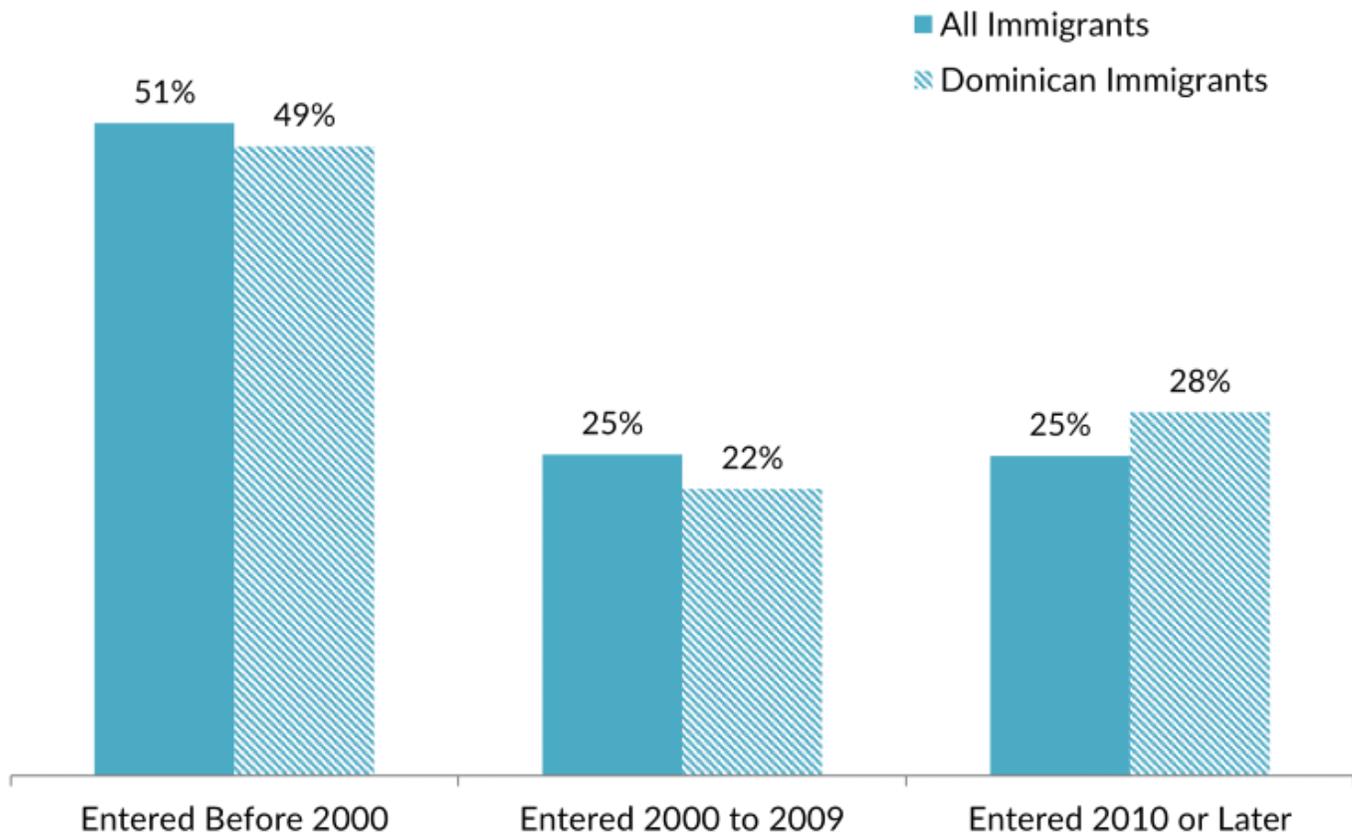
Further, 19 percent of Dominicans in 2019 lived in poverty, compared to 14 percent of all immigrants and 12 percent of the U.S. born.

Immigration Pathways and Naturalization

Immigrants from the Dominican Republic are more likely than the overall foreign-born population to be naturalized U.S. citizens. As of 2019, 57 percent of Dominican immigrants were U.S. citizens, compared to 52 percent of the total foreign-born population.

Arrival times of Dominicans generally track with those of all immigrants, with nearly half (49 percent) entering the United States before 2000, 22 percent entering between 2000 and 2009, and 28 percent entering in 2010 or later.

Figure 6. Dominicans and All Immigrants in the United States by Period of Arrival, 2019

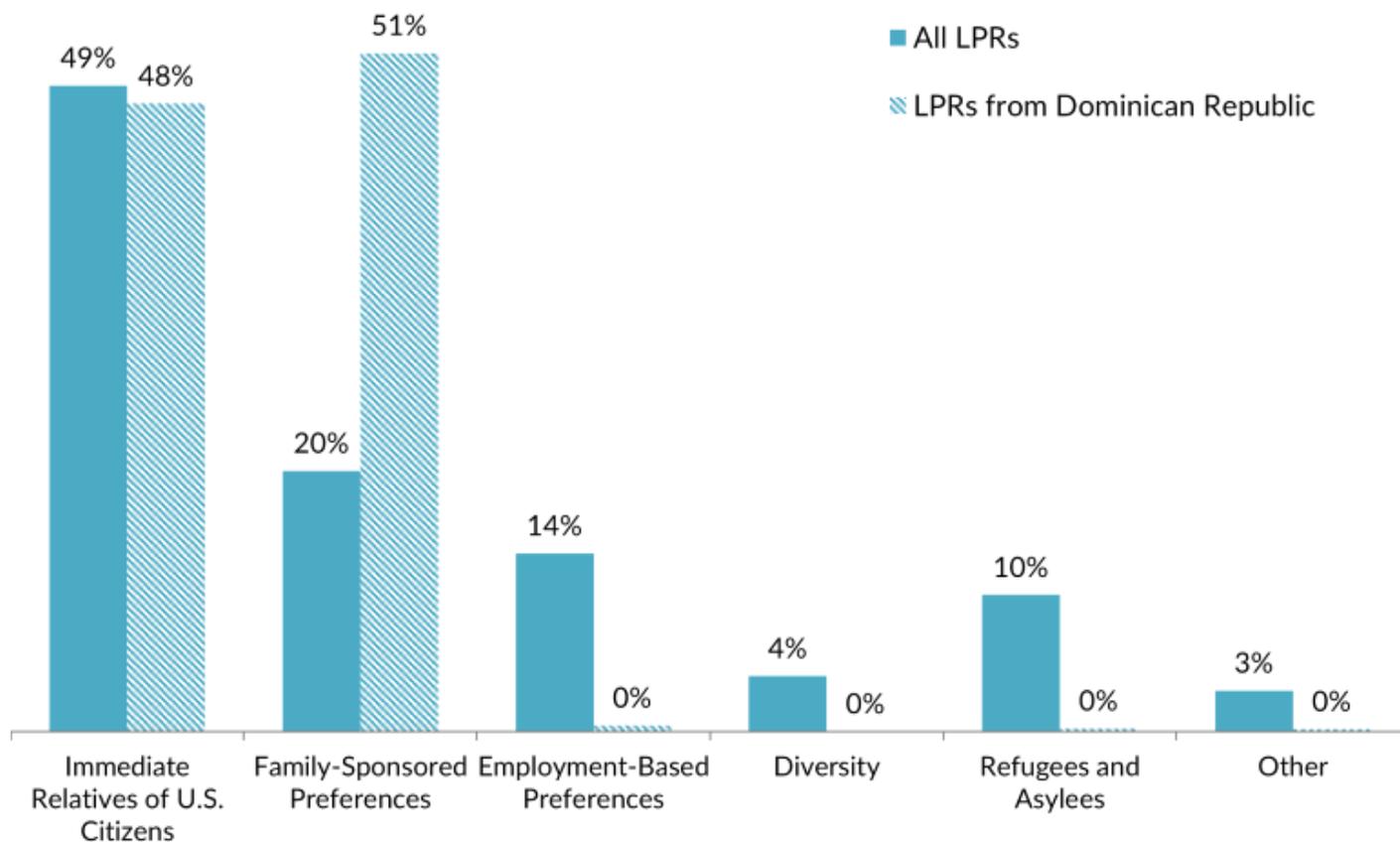


Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not add to 100.

Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS.

The overwhelming majority (99 percent) of Dominican immigrants become lawful permanent residents—also known as green-card holders—through familial ties either as spouses, children, or parents of U.S. citizens, or through other family-sponsored preferences. This compares to 69 percent of all immigrants. Dominican immigrants alone made up approximately 5 percent of new green-card holders who received their status through immediate U.S.-citizen relatives, and 13 percent of those who obtained green cards via other family-sponsored channels in 2019.

Figure 7. Immigration Pathways of Dominicans and All Lawful Permanent Residents in the United States, 2019



Notes: Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens include spouses, minor children, and parents of U.S. citizens. Family-sponsored preferences include adult children and siblings of U.S. citizens, and spouses and children of green-card holders. The Diversity Visa lottery refers to the program established by the Immigration Act of 1990 to allow immigrants from countries with low rates of immigration to enter the United States; the law states that 55,000 diversity visas in total are made available each fiscal year. Individuals born in the Dominican Republic are not eligible for the Diversity Visa 2022 lottery.

Source: MPI tabulation of data from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), *2019 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Washington, DC: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, 2020), [available online](#).

Unauthorized Population

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates that 191,000 unauthorized immigrants from the Dominican Republic resided in the United States as of 2018, accounting for about 2 percent of all 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the country. [Click here](#) for an interactive map of the 2018 unauthorized immigrant population in the United States.

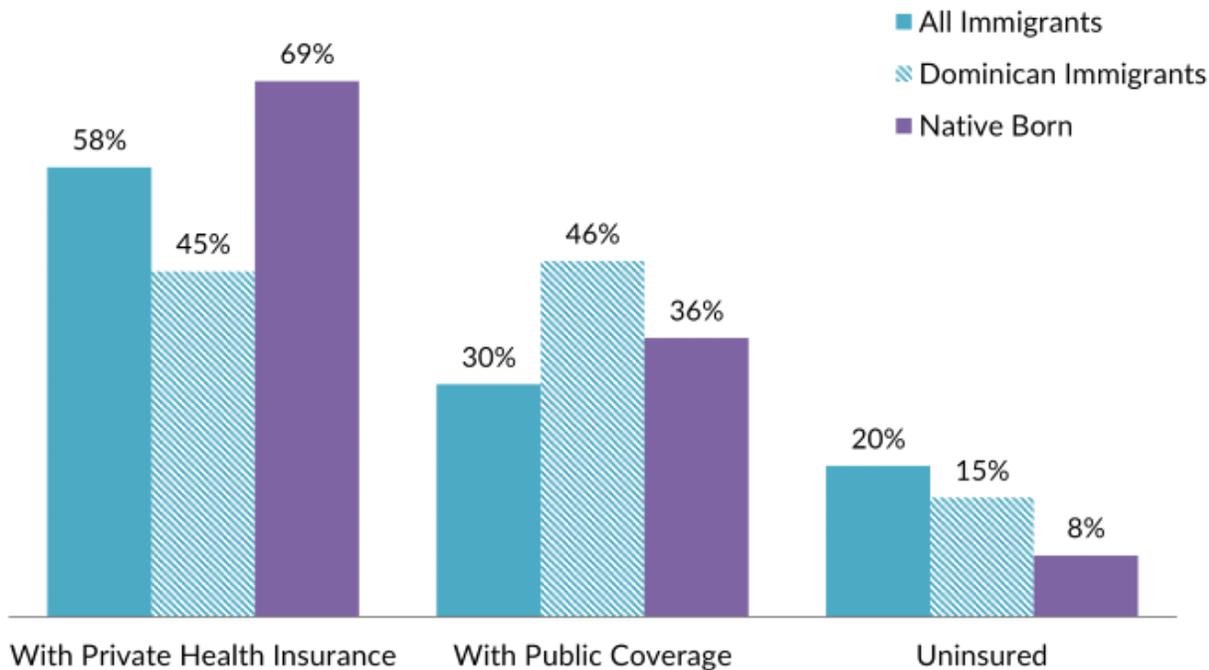
As of December 2020, there were approximately 12,000 unauthorized Dominican youth and young adults who were eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, according to MPI estimates. However, approximately only 1,900 Dominicans had DACA status, representing a very small share of the nearly 636,400 active DACA recipients.

[Click here](#) to view the top origin countries of DACA recipients and their U.S. states of residence.

Health Coverage

Dominican immigrants are slightly less likely to lack health insurance than the total foreign-born population (15 percent versus 20 percent, respectively). Roughly similar shares of Dominican immigrants have public and private health insurance coverage.

Figure 8. Health Coverage for Dominicans, All Immigrants, and the Native Born, 2019



Note: The sum of shares by type of insurance is likely to be greater than 100 because people may have more than one type of insurance.

Source: MPI tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS.

Diaspora

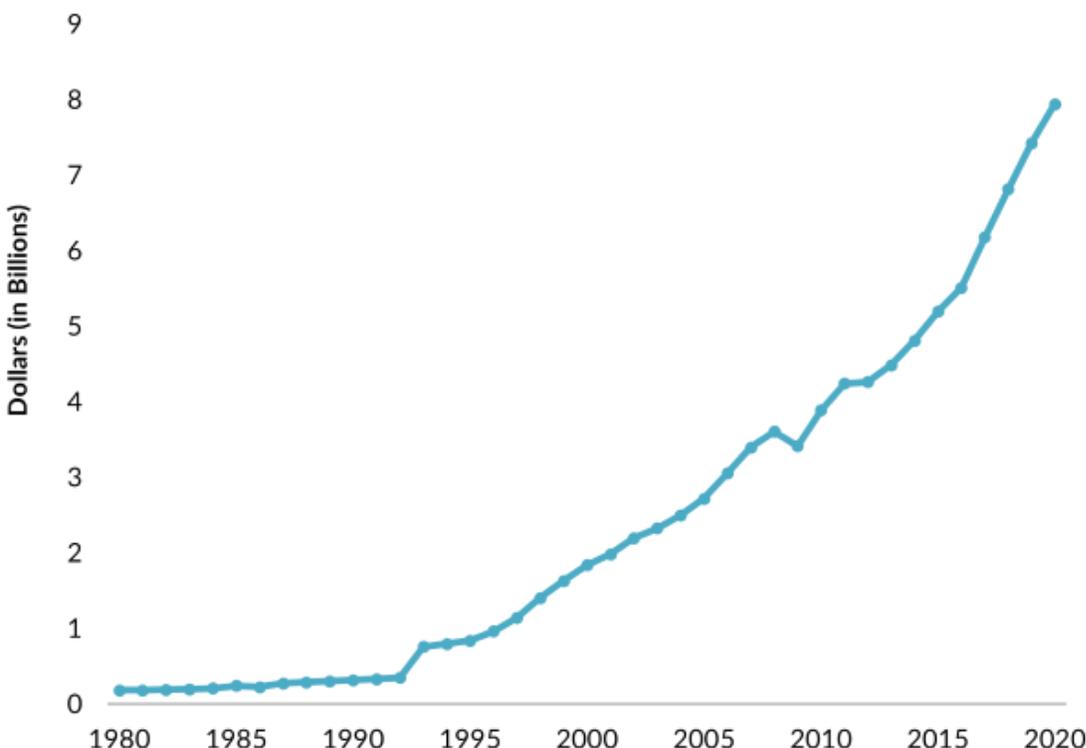
The Dominican diaspora, which is the 18th largest in the United States, is comprised of approximately 2.4 million U.S. residents who were either born in the Dominican Republic or reported Dominican ancestry or origin.

[Click here](#) to see estimates of the top 20 diasporas groups in the United States in 2019.

Remittances

Global remittances to the Dominican Republic have more than doubled in the past decade, reaching nearly \$8 billion as of 2020, according to World Bank estimates. Remittances represented about 10 percent of the Dominican Republic's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020.

Figure 9. Annual Remittance Flows to the Dominican Republic, 1980–2020



Source: World Bank Prospects Group, “Annual Remittances Data,” October 2020 update, [available online](#).

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